

Minutes of Cheshire East AGM

Monday 27th November at Macclesfield Tennis Club

Start time 7 pm

Those present:

John Peck, Rachel Wright, Jane Gay, Louise Whittaker, Marion. S. Duff, Anne Ball, Maggie Swindells, Lucy Armitage (Trustee from Ramblers), Sue Munslow, Colin Finlayson, Neil Collie, Pam Collie, Steve Butterfield, Trevor Park, Phil Guest, Jeanette Clark

Apologies from: Pippa Wainwright.

Welcome from the Chair

John Peck (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting and everyone introduced themselves as we went around the table.

Minutes of last year's AGM and matters arising

The minutes of last year's AGM were approved as a true record.

Report on the work of Cheshire East Area since the last AGM

Webpages for each group and the area are now live on the National Ramblers site.

There have been significant anniversaries for all three groups this year.

John and Trevor attended the General Council in April and John attended the extra Council meeting in November.

There have been several North West cluster group meetings held using "Zoom" (that is, remotely on the internet).

Walks Manager is now up and running

The walk leader guidance booklet recently produced by ramblers was discussed and there was a strong feeling amongst those present that it needed to be "thinned" so as not to deter potential walk leaders by the amount of detail that had to be read, digested and acted upon. Lucy reported that this was a draft version and that the content would be reviewed in the light of comments from members.

The meeting further made the point to Lucy (for her to report back) that there was a need for face-to-face training, buddying is already taking place. Jane made the point that there should have been more time for feedback on the walk leader booklet. Lucy acknowledged this and said the late publication was due to lots of separate groups each having an input to the booklet.

Walk leader training; Maggie reported that East Cheshire had delivered face-to-face training and members from other groups from the area had attended.

There is a need for first aid training in the coming year.

Trevor reported that South Cheshire is now using "MailChimp" when communicating with members.

Finance and treasurers report:

The accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting and had been available for all members to see.

Jeanette explained that quarterly payments are made to the three groups. The money is allocated based on membership and on bids made for specific projects. Generally, Head office agrees with the bids made and the money is available in October. However, there is a limit if any of the groups already has a large reserve in its account.

Proposal to add Area Footpath Officer to the list of officers of the Cheshire East Area

Neil Collie proposed that there should be a central footpath officer for the Area, who would be the main point of contact with other agencies such as Cheshire East Council's Public Rights of Way team and others.

It would also be seen as a backup for the group secretaries and a point of contact with other neighbouring groups and areas, such as the Mid Cheshire area.

It was agreed there would be meetings to share information and ideas for what is needed to maintain and improve the path network in the area.

With path improvements in mind, it was suggested that there might need to be a budget available to the Area in addition to that of the 3 groups.

The proposal was voted on and passed unanimously.

Whilst there was a suggestion that there could be a suitable person for this role, and it was agreed that Neil would approach them, it was suggested that a request for a volunteer be made by each group after this meeting.

Neil volunteered to organise a coordination meeting for the group footpath secretaries. No date was given.

Election of Officers and Independent examiner of accounts

Chair: John Peck

Treasurer: Jeanette Clark

Secretary: Steve Butterfield

Auditor: Michael Dale

Signatories for cheques: Jeanette Clark, Colin Finlayson Phil Guest

Footpath officer: to be advertised as described above.

National Council Delegates:

John Peck and Maggie Swindells

Proposal to Adopt the Cheshire East Area Constitution

As the constitution had been available for all members to comment on and propose any changes and none were forthcoming it was voted on and carried that the constitution in its current wording be formally adopted.

Discussion of any motions and changes to the constitution:

Maggie suggested that the word "chairman" be replaced by "chair" in the constitution and other documentation such as the Agenda (item 1). Since the meeting, it has been suggested that this could be put forward as a motion to General Council.

This would then be a change for the constitution to be agreed at the next AGM. It was also agreed to seek the views of Simon Kellas, governance officer at Ramblers.

This, and any other ideas for motions, must be passed to the secretary for further action to be organised.

Walks Manager

Maggie described the difficulties East Cheshire had encountered in uploading multiple walks using the spreadsheet provided by Ramblers.

Trevor reported that he was uploading walks individually and not having any difficulty. Similarly for Congleton, the walks are uploaded by one person (Rob) and the point made that the contact details of leaders etc. needed to be kept up to date.

As East Cheshire has more walks to upload than the other 2 groups they wanted to be able to use the spreadsheet.

Lucy reported that Ramblers are aware of the problem and are trying to solve it.

In the meantime, Trevor offered to look at the spreadsheet with Jenny Mellor ECR.

Review of the Website Content on the National Ramblers Site

Steve reported that he had received numerous calls from members of the public asking about joining walks and also about joining a walking group. The contact details had come from the Cheshire East webpage.

As this was being actively viewed by members of the public the content must be reviewed and updated regularly.

Maggie had made some suggestions for improvement and Neil pointed out some errors in the wording of the area that Cheshire East covers.

Steve is also a website editor and will look into making the changes that have been suggested.

Later in the meeting both John and Trevor checked the web page and confirmed that links to other web pages were working properly and that they were happy with the page.

Outcomes of General Council and the Extra General Council meeting 25th November

John and Trevor reported on the General Council meeting held in Birmingham 1st April 2023.

The morning session was taken up by reports from officers.

Progress with IT projects and Risk assessments were questioned by members from the floor.

Lucy said that views of members will be taken into account with these projects.

Finance was discussed and it was stated that only 30% of Rambler's funding comes from membership subscriptions, the remainder comes from donations and lottery (postcode lottery) funding. These could stop at any point.

The new President was introduced.

The afternoon session was devoted to discussing the motions. It was reported that this was quite a frustrating session due to the various amendments and other proposed changes.

At our meeting, the need to go back to a 2-day council meeting was discussed and we asked Lucy to report this back as a proposal from our meeting.

John reported on the Extra Council meeting: "To introduce the 10yr strategy to Council members"

Ramblers' mission is to address the inequity in access to the outdoors to make Ramblers more relevant and demonstrate benefit to the wider public.

Outcomes should be, improved participation of communities with the least access to the outdoors through improved provision, quality and access to local footpaths. This should result in improved confidence and knowledge to enable walking outdoors.

The revised strategy was voted on and approved following a discussion on aspects such as change (should this be included?), reference to "anti-racist organisation" and the absence of reference to disabled groups (particularly relevant as our current president is blind).

The main concern was implementation, given that this relies predominantly upon volunteers. Focus on volunteer training and upskilling of volunteers will be required to support implementation.

A discussion at our meeting followed about disability and equity - particularly the practical aspects of "doing" and how to incorporate people with disabilities in walks.

Lucy Armitage Trustee

Lucy confirmed the strategic target to improve access to footpaths to all groups, to improve confidence and to facilitate reach to a wider audience. This should support the need to attract new sources of funding.

- Lucy mentioned possible success criteria as:
- Number of barriers removed from access to paths
- Membership numbers (currently stable)

Questions to Lucy:

Maggie: requested a link to Assemble on Ramblers from the page of the website

John: Fingerprint (or similar) log-on method

Neil: Gave positive feedback on the work of the paths team at Ramblers and how it helped local footpath officers.

Any Other Business

Maggie mentioned the need for induction and training for new chairs of groups

North West Cluster Group: this was described in terms of Zoom meetings and cluster packs of information from the Diane Simcoe support officer for the North.

Steve asked whether anyone else wanted to join the Zoom meetings. Currently, it is Area Chair and Secretary, but no reason why this can't be rotated amongst others if wished.

The meeting closed at 8:45

Actions coming out of the meeting:

1. Action the motion to change the wording from chairman to chair. Maggie, Steve, Lucy, John
2. Neil to organise a footpath meeting. Neil
3. Each group to advertise for an area footpath officer. Each group
4. Change the area webpage. Steve
5. Maggie to let Jenny know about Trevor's offer of help with uploading bulk walks to Walk Manager
6. Each group to consider the need for first aid training. (Maggie, Trevor, John (Pippa))

Since the Meeting:

- 1 John has appointed Trevor Park as proxy and Maggie has appointed Steve Butterfield as her proxy. So, Trevor and Steve will attend the General council to vote on behalf of John and Maggie.
- 2 The following motion has been submitted for consideration by the motions committee:

Motion submission form



Title:	UPDATING ARTICLES AND STANDING ORDERS TO INCLUDE ALL MEMBERS			
Motion:	This General Council calls upon the Board of Trustees to update the Articles and Standing Orders of Ramblers so that all terms include every member, irrespective of gender.			
Background notes: (250 words max)	The current standing orders for Ramblers England use the term Chairman, rather than Chair or Convener. We would like to encourage and support all volunteers and members in playing an active part in their local group and area, regardless of their gender. This is a simple step towards ensuring that we are a welcoming, inclusive and diverse organisation.			
Applies to: (delete as applicable)	GB	England	Scotland	Wales
Submitted by: (name)	Stephen Butterfield			
On behalf of:	Cheshire East Area			